

*The 110th Congress, which began in January 2007 as the first Democratic-led Congress in a dozen years, has been active in addressing national needs. The work has been both challenging and rewarding; at times contentious and partisan, at other times bi-partisan. My philosophy in representing the First Congressional District has been to help my colleagues in the House seize opportunities to improve the quality of life for Americans who are worried about their future. A partial report of our record to this end is as follows:*

<b>Accomplishments of the 110th Congress – Legislation Accomplished</b>	<b>Laws Enacted or Initiatives</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- First minimum wage increase in 10 years.</li><li>- Largest expansion of college aid since the GI Bill.</li><li>- Energy strategy to develop alternative fuels and to promote energy independence by increasing passenger vehicle fuel efficiency standards for the first time in 30 years.</li><li>- Implementation of 9-11 Commission recommendations to screen all air cargo and overseas port cargo and to improve communications between first responders.</li><li>- Most sweeping lobbying and ethics reform in a generation, including the establishment of an independent office of congressional ethics to evaluate House ethics allegations.</li><li>- Largest veterans' health care funding increase in history.</li><li>- Higher care standards for wounded soldiers.</li><li>- Doubling of basic research and development funds, doubling of manufacturing research funds, and creation of 25,000 new math and science teachers.</li><li>- Ban on health coverage and employment discrimination based on an individual's DNA.</li><li>- Benchmarks and progress report on Iraq required.</li><li>- Water Resources Development Act, addressing flood control and the restoration of waterways (Presidential veto overridden to enact).</li><li>- Overdue hurricane relief to rebuild Gulf Coast housing, hospitals, schools and levees.</li><li>- Economic stimulus-focused tax rebate for 130 million families, immediately providing up to \$600 per individual and \$1,200 per married couple, plus an additional \$300 per child.</li><li>- Emergency children's health coverage extended before S-CHIP coverage ran out.</li><li>- Reduction in backlog of passports through hiring boost.</li><li>- Tax relief for homeowners whose mortgage lender forgives part of their home loan debt.</li><li>- \$180 million to provide mortgage foreclosure mitigation counseling and assistance to families at risk of losing their homes.</li></ul>	

### Vetoed by the President

- Timetables to redeploy troops from Iraq.
- Expansion of stem cell research.
- S-CHIP coverage extended to millions of additional children without health insurance.
- Unequivocal, unambiguous ban on torture that applies to all U.S. government agents and agencies, including the CIA.

Passed House and awaiting Senate action

- Medicare required to bargain for cheaper prescription drugs.
- Ban on health coverage discrimination against individuals seeking treatment for mental health issues.
- Requirement of 15% of U.S. electricity from renewable energy sources as part of greenhouse gas reduction plan.

**Accomplishments of the 110th Congress – Oversight** *In our system of checks and balances, the Legislative Branch must oversee and challenge the Executive Branch when the agencies or White House does not uphold public laws or the public trust. This January, a Brookings Institution study reported that “[t]he most striking change in congressional activity in 2007 was the dramatic increase in oversight following years of inattention and deference under the Republican majority.”*<sup>1</sup> A partial list of our oversight activities to date is:

### Hearings on –

- The President’s domestic surveillance powers and activities;
- The treatment of detainees and the legality and consequences of “enhanced” interrogations;
- The preservation of White House electronic records in compliance with the Government Records Act.
- The President’s use of executive signing statements and claims of executive privilege;
- The future of Guantanamo detainees;
- U.S. reliance on private security firms overseas;
- The pace and accountability of U.S.-financed Iraq reconstruction efforts and combating profiteering in Iraq;
- The plight of Iraq refugees and needed improvements to Iraq’s justice system;
- The outstanding need and rate of progress regarding relief from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita;
- The human capital needs of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection; and
- Unethical practices in the student loan industry.

**Oversight activities can bring results:** **The Justice Department’s Firing of U.S. Attorneys –** In 2007, House Judiciary Committee took former Justice Department official Monica Goodling to task regarding her role in the firings of U.S. Attorneys. The inquiry and national attention brought to the issue preceded the resignation of Attorney General Alberto Gonzales. This February, the House passed historic contempt citations against White House Chief of Staff Joshua Bolten and former White House Counsel Harriet Miers over their refusal to cooperate with an investigation into the firings of the U.S. attorneys.

### Quality of Medical Care for Wounded Soldiers –

**Responding to reports of neglect at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee held hearings on why wounded soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan were subject to poor care and conditions. Following the hearings, Major General George Weightman, the commander of Walter Reed, was relieved of command. In addition, Army Secretary Francis Harvey and Veterans Administration Secretary Jim Nicholson resigned their posts, and Army Surgeon General Kevin Kelley retired.**

## **Reporting of Afghanistan and Iraq Events**

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The Oversight and Government Reform Committee also investigated the misleading information released regarding the death of Army Ranger Specialist Patrick Tillman in Afghanistan and the capture and rescue of Army Private Jessica Lynch in Iraq. While the Department of Defense originally reported that Specialist Tillman was killed by enemy combatants, it was later disclosed that his death was the result of friendly fire. Misleading accounts were also uncovered regarding the circumstances involving the capture of Private Lynch.

## **Integrity of Climate Change Science**

– The House Oversight Committee this Congress has additionally carried out several investigations focusing on politicization of government agencies. In multiple hearings, the Committee heard testimony describing pressure placed on scientists studying climate change to adapt their findings to support political stances taken by the Administration. This led to the Committee's December 2007 report, entitled "White House Engaged in Systematic Effort to Manipulate Climate Change Science," which concluded that the White House censored climate change scientists and extensively edited climate change reports. The report is available at <http://oversight.house.gov>

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## **On the Agenda – Where We Need to Go Next**

*More needs to be done. Here's a partial list of where I think the Congress should act next:*

### **We need to**

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- Safely **disengage our troops from Iraq**, bring our soldiers home, and substitute a multi-faceted diplomatic effort to encourage political compromise within Iraq and discourage Iraq's neighbors from engaging in that country's civil strife.

- Turn our attention to the security, economic and social situation in **Afghanistan**, which has been shortchanged during the Iraq War.
  
- Enact **mandatory emission reductions** for CO2 and other greenhouse gases that cause global warming while taking even bolder steps to increase energy conservation, efficiency and production from renewable sources.
  
- Ensure **rapid implementation** of 100% screening of passenger air cargo and incoming sea cargo, enhanced security at nuclear and chemical plants, and the interoperability of communications and information sharing for emergency responders.
  
- Provide **health coverage** for the nearly 50 million Americans who do not have health insurance.
- Provide additional **transit** and other **energy efficient** surface transportation options in order to move more Americans from conventional automobiles to modes of travel that produce less CO2.
- Rehabilitate more distressed **public housing**, make new public housing units more energy efficient, offer more rental assistance for needy families and provide **adequate housing** for the elderly and disabled.
  
- Fund research for **cures to diseases** at levels that at least keep up with inflation.

Sincerely,

John W. Olver  
Member of Congress